

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC372611
Inspection date	17 February 2010
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	20 April 2009
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is in a large detached and refurbished farmhouse. It is set back from the main road along a private lane. The home provides care and accommodation for up to two young people although usually it is used as a single occupancy unit. Admissions are planned with medium to long-term placements being accommodated. The staff aim to provide safe, age appropriate and needs-led care in a nurturing and empowering environment for young people with challenging behaviour.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection that concentrated on all of the key national minimum standards.

The inspection focused on the Every Child Matters outcome areas related to being healthy, safeguarding and recreation, how young people are enabled to enjoy and achieve, relationships between young people and their carers, the competence of staff and their management and the general standards of the accommodation in which the service is provided. At the time of the inspection only one young person was living at the home who made some contribution to the findings. The home is being operated efficiently by a new manager who is ensuring that the resident young person's needs are being appropriately addressed. The action and recommendations arising from this inspection refer to an administrative omission and reported environmental shortfalls.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations arising from the last random inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

An awareness of healthy eating and the importance of a balanced diet is promoted with young people living at the home. Individual preferences and allergies are assimilated into the home's menus and mealtime arrangements. Young people are introduced to self-help skills, as part of their daily routine. Menu planning is inclusive offering a broad range of dishes including those from different cultures.

The health needs of young people are assessed prior to and during their placement at the home to ensure that all needs are being provided for. Young people have succinct health plans and discrete records that indicate how relevant guidance, informed advice and practical support is provided. Some specific health and personal care related issues have been omitted during the amendment of this document. Personal and Sexual Health Education is included in the registered providers school curriculum and introduced where appropriate within the home's practice. Young people are assisted by having regular access to a range of external services and professionals to help them with any specific emotional, social or medical needs. They are practically supported when they are unwell by staff who arrange general practitioner appointments and preventive routines such as optical and dental checks.

Young people's health and safety is actively promoted by the registered provider's policies, procedures, guidance and staff training. Staff receive training in the safe handling and administration of medication and first aid. Medicine is stored securely in lockable cabinets and accurately recorded when dispensed. Good arrangements are in place for the treatment and recording of any accidents occurring within the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children's home promotes the right to privacy for young people by ensuring high levels of administrative confidentiality, by providing young people with their own bedrooms, bathing and toilet facilities, by staff protecting sensitive personal information and by being careful when communicating any information about young people to parents and other professionals.

Any concerns and complaints made by young people living at the home are always taken seriously by care staff. This is demonstrated by everyday issues and concerns being routinely discussed and addressed before they become a complaint. When complaints are made they attract attention and investigation. There is a clear and effective complaint policy that is summarised by the young person's guide to the home and followed in practice. Young people say that they know how to complain and who they can complain to. They have access to a visiting independent advocacy service should they require help or support in making their concerns known.

The welfare and safety of young people living at the home is consistently promoted by the policies produced by the registered provider. These policies recognise regulatory requirements and good practice in areas of child protection that include countering bullying, effective behaviour management and safeguarding children. Staff know how to access statutory guidance including the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. They are also trained how to recognise and report signs of abuse. The registered provider makes available regular staff development opportunities to ensure that staff are trained to look after young people safely. Young people living at the home know that they should be looked after in a way that ensures they are not hurt, abused or put at risk in any way.

Routine internal and external monitoring by persons independent of the home ensure that young people can always make their views known. The home ensures the safety of young people by having tried and tested reporting systems in place to notify relevant authorities about significant events including any unauthorised absences.

Behaviour management is effective because it is based on the active encouragement of acceptable behaviour. This is achieved by providing consistent expectations and by a culture of consistently praising positive behaviour. Young people know what the standards of behaviour expected from them and what the rules of the home are. They reinforce these messages by producing their own posters to provide a daily visual reminder. Resident numbers, individual care needs and risk assessment influence the home's staffing levels to establish and ensure that an appropriate, safe level of supervision is always present. Staff regularly receive statutory training about the continuum of behaviour management. This includes the reasonable application of an accredited form of physical restraint where necessary. Any behavioural incidents or applied sanctions are always reviewed by the home's manager and young people's feedback is sought to help evaluate the safety, transparency and effectiveness of these practices.

The home confirms positive responses to the potential dangers to looked after children by producing a range of risk assessments that cover all aspects of safety in the living environment, for example, the risk from fire and hazards, or from young people's behaviour and recreational activities which can sometimes involve lower levels of supervision. Risk assessments are effective because they are reviewed regularly and take into account daily tasks and any changes affecting the home such as changes of resident, any revised staffing levels and changes to the home's routine.

The home employs robust procedures for monitoring all visitors. No unauthorised person can access the building or have access to the young people living there. Staff personnel files were not examined during this inspection, however, the manager is competent in ensuring that only appropriately checked and cleared staff are appointed to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people living at the home are fully supported by the staff who all take responsibility for the safe delivery and monitoring of care plans. Routinely compliant behaviour confirms that relationships between staff and young people are positive and enhance general socialisation. These relationships support general health and well-being, special interests, religious and cultural needs. The staff team actively promote involvement for young people in special interest groups and activities outside of the home where these are assessed as safe and appropriate. Young people's understanding of their behaviour is helped by accessing qualified therapists employed by the registered provider.

Young people's education is promoted through the registered providers education policy and the homes commitment to ensuring young people have realistic opportunities to achieve. Age appropriate education is provided by the organisation which is tailored to suit each young person's academic abilities and interests. Young people are accompanied and supported throughout their school day by residential staff working in partnership with teachers to ensure each individualised curriculum is promoted. Educational needs are specifically addressed and recorded by in-house individual education plans.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have individual care plans and an allocated designated key worker. Their placement plan evaluates all aspects of daily living and the purpose of the placement. All staff provide encouragement and practical support to assist young people achieve positive outcomes in the different areas of their life.

Statutory reviews take place and the progress of young people is being fully monitored. These meetings are independently chaired and young people are encouraged to attend to express their views.

Young people are able to maintain appropriate contact with their families or other people who are significant in their lives. Concise case records confirm that this is taking place in a manner that is consistent with respective placing authorities agreements and the overall care plans. Young people can access advocates and persons independent of the home to represent their views and promote their rights.

Staff understand that moving home can be very difficult for some young people and this awareness is used to provide support and reassurance in these circumstances. Young people new to the home would be encouraged to bring their own possessions so they can personalise their bedrooms.

Staff successfully communicate with young people to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account throughout the care planning process. Young people are actively encouraged to make suggestions about the service and express views about any aspects of their placement plans. They do this in one-to-one sessions with their key worker or collectively through young people's meetings. When being used as a single occupancy home young people have informal access to staff at all times.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people live in a fairly ruraly located home that is domestic in style, rustic in character, homely and pleasantly decorated. The home is furnished to a good standard and provides young people with ample space for study, relaxation and recreation. Young people have their own bedrooms that have been individualised according to particular interests. The home provides a choice of shared bathrooms and toilets. Although generally well maintained the bathrooms show some signs of wear and tear. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the home is very poor because the shared un-metalled driveway is being damaged by agricultural vehicles.

Young people are taught how to keep themselves clean and appreciate the value of money through using their regular personal allowances. They can shop for and look after their own belongings with the assistance of staff when needed.

For older residents relevant life skills can be acquired through daily participation with the tasks involved with running the home, such as shopping, personal budgeting, cooking and undertaking some daily household chores with staff help. These tasks are incorporated into independence plans where young people show a willingness to actively engage in planning for the future.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose for the home includes all information required by Schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations, including details of the staffing complement deployed to look after young people at the home. Young people receive useful details about the home from an amended children's guide.

Young people are looked after by a competent staff team who are thoroughly supported by their newly appointed manager and her deputy. Importance is placed by the manager on regular staff supervision and appraisal of the workers to ensure the quality and consistency of day-to-day care. Staff develop their practice by having access to comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance which is enhanced by regular personal development and training opportunities.

The home has well established internal and independent quality monitoring systems that effectively highlight and address all aspects of the care being provided by the home. These systems underline the effectiveness of the home's management in safeguarding the welfare

and interests and differing needs of the young people living there. The production of a development plan confirms the registered person's commitment by outlining the home's future objectives.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive an individualised service in a home chosen to provide a package of care befitting age, ability and potential risk while not isolating young people from the broader community. All staff have a good knowledge of the young people they are working with, including their cultural and disability background, which helps ensure that holistic needs are being addressed as far as is possible in this domestic setting. The home has developed explicit policies and procedures promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of their service for children from differing cultures and heritage.

Young people's individual case files are stored and arranged in a manner that are readily accessible to staff while maintaining confidentiality. Young people are made aware of the contents of their files and know they can request access to them should they need to.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
24	ensure that the interior of the home is maintained in a good state of decorative repair. Attention should be given to the condition of the shared bathroom. Regulation 31.2(e) (national minimum standard 24.3)	22 May 2010

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that each child has a clear written health plan covering all the areas identified by the standard and which clearly identifies any particular health related needs (national minimum standard 12.2)
- ensure that the exterior of the home is maintained in a good state of structural repair. The access road to the home should be safely maintained (national minimum standard 24.3)